

UK Statement for the general debate in the ECOSOC high-level segment

Mr President,

My government welcomes this week's discussions and debate, which have been enriched by the National Voluntary Presentations from Member States.

We look forward to the adoption of the Annual Ministerial Review, on the important theme of implementing internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education. This Review provides a valuable analysis of the progress made to date; and what remains to be done if we are to reach the goals that we all share.

We particularly welcome the Review's emphasis on the importance of girls' access to, and retention in, quality education; as well as its call for continued efforts to ensure that commitments to education development are met in full.

Globally, there has been significant progress in getting children into school but the progress is slowing, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states. To ensure equity of access, it must be addressed both within and outside the education sector. Although primary enrolments have increased significantly in recent years, we are still faced with deeper problems of retention, completion and low levels of learning; and there is considerable scope to improve efficiency and value for money.

We strongly believe that distance and costs should not prevent children from attending school regularly year on year. Classrooms should be well equipped, safe and free from harassment or discrimination. Girls and boys should have equal rights, including those with disability or living with HIV/AIDS. Each school should have well-trained, committed teachers, and sufficient learning materials. Furthermore, schools should be well-led, -managed and supported by an efficient education system.

The UK Government has prioritised UK aid spending on programmes to help provide access to basic services, including education. We will harness the transformative power of quality education so that by 2014, through our bilateral programmes, we will be supporting 11 million children in school, including new programmes to help increase the number of girls completing primary and secondary education. We will help train more than 190,000 teachers and improve the quality of children's learning.

We believe education is a basic human right that transforms lives; particularly the lives of girls. It contributes towards the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals and to the resilience and inclusive growth of societies. Education-related development goals can only be reached with greater international efforts. We must all reinforce our support for education, to build a foundation of opportunity for future generations and to support children to reach their full potential. We are pleased to participate in this important debate.

Thank you.